

EXHIBIT I



CALIFORNIA

Cal State system adds caste to anti-discrimination policy in groundbreaking decision



BY NANI WALKER | DIRECTOR OF L.A. TIMES SHORT DOCS

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The California State University announced it has added caste as a protected category in its systemwide [anti-discrimination policy](#), a hard-fought policy deeply meaningful to Dalit students of South Asian decent.

The Cal State policy came after years of activism from Dalit students and allies to bring an end to caste discrimination they encountered on campuses across California.

“I commend the incredible work and dedication of the students, employees and other partners whose efforts ensure that our policies align with our bold aspirations,” said Cal State Chancellor Joseph I. Castro.

Caste-oppressed people call themselves Dalit, which means “broken people.” Formerly known as untouchables, Dalits fell at the bottom of a centuries-old — and now outlawed — social hierarchy that governed the lives of over a quarter-billion people worldwide, including many in the U.S.

Caste was handed down at birth and determined a person’s social status based on so-called spiritual purity reflected by a feudal ranking of professions. Although caste discrimination is officially banned in India and other South Asian countries, the practice is rampant in the region and among communities in the diaspora.

Nepali Dalit social worker [Prem Pariyar was a driving force](#) in the fight to add caste as a protected category at the 23-campus Cal State system. An alum at Cal State East Bay, he first advocated for caste protections in the department of social work where he was a graduate student, then started organizing with other Cal State students.

“When I faced caste discrimination within the campus and outside in the community, I felt very disappointed and low,” Pariyar said. “I thought I had left caste discrimination behind in Nepal. But I was wrong.”



Prem Pariyar, who left caste oppression behind when he moved from Nepal to the United States, continues to fight for Dalit rights. (Nani Walker / Los Angeles Times)

Caste oppression has been documented in the United States by [Equality Labs](#), an organization focused on ending white supremacy and casteism. In 2016, the nonprofit [conducted a survey](#) of 1,500 South Asians in the United States and found that 1 in 3 Dalit students surveyed reported being discriminated against during their education in the U.S. and 2 out of 3 Dalits said they had been treated unfairly at their workplace.

“This win is historic.... The movement for caste equity in the United States is growing exponentially as caste-oppressed Americans and allies bravely organize for our rights,” said Thenmozhi Soundararajan, executive director of Equality Labs.

Dalit student leader M. Banger, a Cal State Sacramento alum who goes by an alias due to recent doxxing, describes not feeling safe disclosing their caste after hearing dominant caste students and faculty make casteist remarks and being excluded from opportunities like student clubs, group texts, Bhangra and Giddha folk dance groups,

and study groups. Fellow students assumed Banger was caste-privileged and made derogatory remarks and slurs about Dalit families.

“It’s so insidious ... saying we are dirty or stupid.... We need caste protections so there’s accountability,” Banger said.

For most non-South Asians, caste practice in the U.S. is a faraway and foreign concept.

“I was moved by the stories from Dalit students.... I thank these student leaders for educating all of us in California higher education about this important civil rights issue and allowing me to be a part of their movement at CSU, and making a lasting mark on the statewide institution’s anti-discrimination policy,” said Krystal Raynes, a Cal State student trustee.



Prem Pariyar has been a driving force in the movement to ask for caste protections from California State University- East Bay.
(Nani Sahra Walker)

Manmit Singh, an ally and organizer at San Francisco State, is urging public and private universities across the nation to join the growing movement to justice and equity after Cal State's systemwide move. UC Davis, Harvard and Brandeis University have added similar protections in recent years.

Pariyar has his sights set on expanding anti-caste policies, working with allies and groups like Equality Labs. As part of the delegate assembly of the National Assn. of Social Workers — California Chapter, he has been discussing the addition of caste in the anti-discrimination policy on the state level with the group's leadership.

He is also pushing for universities to create training and curriculum on the issue for South Asians and non-South Asian students, hire “culturally competent” leadership from caste-oppressed backgrounds, fund research and scholarship on caste and invest in advancing the careers of caste-oppressed students.

“This recognition is huge, but not enough,” he said.



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